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You Won't Miss This Bus: Transit Signal Priority (TSP) Project

By Ahmad Rastegarpour Chief of the Transportation Management, Operational Systems And Software Development Branch.

On California's roadways, we struggle every day to save valuable seconds going from one place to another. Now, imagine that you could catch your bus on time and arrive at your destination saving not just a few seconds, but several minutes.

This is exactly what will happen if you are riding in the Bay Area on the Rapid Bus 72R along San Pablo Avenue from 20th Street in Oakland to College Street in the San Pablo.

As part of the East Bay's SMART Corridors Project, Caltrans electrical engineers helped to deploy the first successful Transit Signal Priority (TSP) System along San Pablo Avenue, which will aid bus riders to get where they want to be *on time*. Caltrans is actively working on the flexibility goal, to make transit a more practical travel option.

The East Bay SMART Corridors Project involves 20 partner agencies. By using both technology and partnerships to better manage traffic, the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA) is coordinating the successful deployment of SMART Corridors in the Bay Area.

"It was through this partnership that we could meet the objectives of the project," said Cyrus Minoofar, the SMART Corridors Program Manager. "The biggest challenge to overcome was institutional, and thanks to Caltrans, this will happen," he added.



East Bay Rapid Bus riders now have a new, more efficient way of getting around town.

The San Pablo TSP project includes 63 traffic signals along San Pablo Avenue. However, only San Pablo Rapid Buses are equipped with signal priority. Therefore, local buses do not have access to the signal priority at this time.

The 16-mile San Pablo Corridor was selected because of its substantial ridership, sufficient length to accumulate travel time, and interconnected traffic signals. It usually takes between 52 to 57 minutes for the regular bus to complete each trip. The record trip time for a Rapid Bus with TSP is 35 minutes, amounting to a 32 percent reduction in travel time.

Features of the Rapid Bus include:

- Fewer bus stops
- Priority for buses at traffic signals
- Use of the travel lane, instead of curb lane
- Headway-based schedule
- Unique graphics on buses and new shelters (or kiosks) to show the Rapid Bus schedules and realtime bus arrival information

The Transit Signal Priority scheme deployed for the San Pablo TSP system is "headway-based," the time between one bus and another. This scheme allows the traffic engineer to set the minimum amount of headway time required between transit vehicles in order for the request to be handled by the traffic controller.

The headway times programmed into the transit priority systems must correspond with the transit agency's scheduled headway times. Headways of 10 minutes are initially being used.

The project has achieved transit priority by extending the green time of the traffic light for the bus, or by providing an "early green," when the bus is approaching the intersection. Headway times are flexible, and they can be adjusted in the system if and when transit schedules change in the future.

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The brains behind the Rapid Bus include Kwan Lau and Lindy Cabugao, both D4 engineers; Cyrus Minoofar, Alameda County Congestion Management Agency; James Lau and Paul Chiu, also D4 engineers; and Ceasar Pujol of Alameda County Transit.

This is how the system works:

TSP can provide up to 10 seconds "extended green time" prior to the traffic signal turning red in the direction of the Rapid Bus, or it can provide an "early green" when the bus is approaching the traffic signal. This will help the Rapid Bus to arrive at its scheduled stops *on time*.

However, this methodology will not cut the minimum pedestrian time (The time for a pedestrian to cross the street), nor skip any service to the other streets. All the required logic is contained at the traffic signal controller and the "time of day" and "day of week" timing plans are modified to accomplish the "transit priority." Caltrans electrical engineers wrote the software for the traffic controllers to enable bus priority.

Transit vehicle detection is done through Opticom receivers already installed on the traffic signal poles (in most locations) currently used for emergency vehicles (such as ambulances), and new Opticom transmitters installed on the Rapid Buses. The Opticom system can distinguish between transit priority requests and emergency signal preemption requests.

Alameda County (AC) Transit obtained grant funding to pay for the cost of the signal priority project along San Pablo, which included modifications to the traffic signal timings along the corridor. For the San Pablo Rapid 72R, the project team also photographed every potential stop, measured and relocated bus poles and other "street furniture" in order to allow for handicapped accessibility, bus shelter location and smooth pedestrian flow.

Within California and around the nation, other agencies have deployed many types of TSP systems. AC Transit planners, managers, and their consultant evaluated these systems prior to selecting the desired methodology.

The San Pablo TSP is similar to the system deployed by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation. "The selection of a headway-based system was a win-win situation for everyone," explained Jon Twichell, AC Transit Manager.

"We chose this system because it was simple, workable, and could easily be implemented. There is incentive for the bus driver, and passengers won't miss their bus, because

they know exactly when it will arrive, he added. This will increase our ridership, which may result in less vehicular traffic on San Pablo Avenue."

"This is going to be the new trend," said Kai Leung, Senior Electrical Engineer in the Division of Traffic Operations, Sacramento. "Caltrans needs to build on this experience and develop additional expertise in the TSP system. This is an area that we can increase the efficiency of the system."

The successful deployment of San Pablo TSP is a product of a teamwork that included traffic engineers and software developers from ACCMA, AC Transit, Caltrans and their consultants. For the state-owned and operated intersections, Caltrans HQ's Traffic Operations and District 4 staff had to modify the existing traffic signal software, adjust the traffic signal timings, and finally deploy it in the field.

Specifically, Kai Leung was instrumental in the software development, testing and debugging for this project. District 4 staff included Paul Chiu, Lindy Cabugao, and James Lau. They were instrumental in the successful testing and implementation of the transit priority software and installation of hardware at the intersections.

"Experts from many agencies and private consultants had to work together to make this deployment a success," said Cesar Pujol, the AC Transit's SMART Corridors' traffic engineer and liaison.



Transit agencies from across the state are hoping that Rapid Bus technology will soon turn into a trend.

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New D7 Office Building 'A Blend of LA Sensibility...Urban Tradition'

People, equipment and office supplies were on the move by the end of August as Caltrans began transferring into the new \$190 million District 7 Building in downtown Los Angeles.

The shiny edifice, between First, Second, Main and Los Angeles streets, is a 13-story, 1.05 million-square foot addition to the LA skyline and a replacement for the old Caltrans office building that dates back to 1949 (and an annex that was added in 1961).

And, perhaps just as importantly, the twoyear long project is on schedule, within budget and up to expectations. Official projections called for an October completion date.

The building will provide much-needed space for more than 1,800 District employees — about a third of which currently work in temporary leased space. Their new work site will include an 1142-car parking structure, an auto shop, warehouse, conference center, childcare facility, wellness center and public cafeteria.

The new building, at 100 South Main Street, is the first building to be commissioned by way of an international design competition under the State of California's Design Excellence Program.

The Department of General Services commissioned the work and contracted with Main & First Design/Build Associates for construction. Thom Mayne of the Santa Monica-based Morphosis designed the new



building, after a worldwide search for architectural bidders.

The structure's most dramatic characteristic is perhaps the "scrim," or metal mesh that sheathes windows on the east and west sides. Its 2,000 panels are designed to move along with the sun's path, which allows light, but not heat, to penetrate the building.

"At dusk, the building is transparent, textured and windowed everywhere," said Mayne. "At mid-day the building is buttoned up against the sun — appearing to be devoid of windows entirely."

In fact, the architect has described the new building as a "blend of LA sensibility with a more cosmopolitan urban tradition."

Another landmark feature is a work of public art by artist Keith Sonnier entitled "Motordom," the largest public art installation in Los Angeles.

It is integrated into the architecture of the four-story outdoor lobby, filling it with a half-mile of neon and argon tubing arranged in bands of red and blue light that is reminiscent of the ribbons of headlights on California freeways.

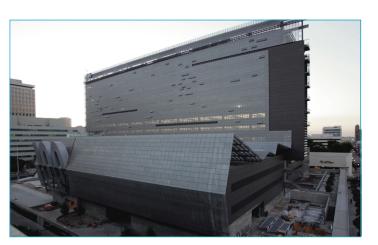
The old building, at 120 South Spring Street, was damaged severely during the 1971 Northridge Earthquake and had highly visible cracks in a number of places. Consequently, the District began thinking about a replacement for its obsolete building during the 1970s, but was stymied by funding and environmental constraints.

However, by the late 1990s the structure's failings had become so obvious that state officials realized something needed to be done quickly. The construction team operated on a fast-track, with design and construction being carried out concurrently.

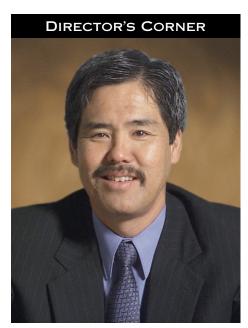
The result is a world-class government building that will take its place in the increasingly vital downtown area of Los Angeles.







Caltrans Making Strides in Improving Its Performance



Interim Director Randell H. Iwasaki

Over the last few months, a great deal of attention has been directed to efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of California government.

Hearings are being conducted around the state, for example, to hear from the public regarding recommendations proposed in the California Performance Review (CPR). At the same time, Caltrans has moved forward with a series of steps in response to the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency's Performance Improvement Initiative (PII).

The PII, which is intended to support and reinforce the CPR, seeks to transform the Department into an organization that is run more like a business, allowing all Caltrans employees to do their jobs better and provide a better level of service to our customers.

I am proud of what we have accomplished so far and commend the Caltrans workforce for the way they have stepped up to this challenge. We are making great strides in a variety of areas such as performance measures, a renewed emphasis on preventive maintenance, more delegation of decision-making power to the Districts and consolidation of information technology services.

Transportation System Performance Measures: We have established a set of key system performance outcomes and measures that can be used to evaluate and monitor the state's transportation system. These measures will help transportation agencies across the state make better policy and business decisions in such area as the State Highway System, local streets and roads, transit, rail and aviation.

Organizational System Performance Measures: The Department expects to have a preliminary set of measures in place by the end of month that can be used to evaluate its own work performance.

These measures will help the Department make better business decisions, while producing a better return on its transportation investments.

Preventive Maintenance: An increase of nearly \$46 million has been earmarked this

year for preserving the state's highway pavement. This funding will allow the Department to enhance its cost-effective, long-term pavement preservation program.

Local Decision-Making: The Department has instituted a plan to have more decision making power vested with the Districts at the "lowest appropriate level." This change will increase our accountability to our local transportation partners while creating a greater business-to-business relationship.

Consolidating Information Technology (IT): The Department completed the first step of its consolidation effort in Sacramento, and plans future centralization in the Districts. This initial part of the plan has resulted in less duplication of work, lower operating expenses, and increased security.

For example, Headquarters IT expects to save approximately \$3 million this year in operating expenses, a 10 percent reduction, compared to last fiscal year.

All of the actions I have mentioned have real merit, and in aggregate they can make a difference in the Department's ability to do business on behalf of the traveling public, our ultimate customers.

However, our work is not done. The real key to reform is a commitment to continuous improvement — recognizing that complacency is our enemy and that we can always do a better job. Thanks for your effort and keep up the good work.



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Quick-thinking Caltrans Engineer Plays Key Role in Amber Alert Recovery



Sergio Gomez, a Caltrans Civil Engineer in District 4, has been credited with the key phone call that led to finding Mikayla Viana, who was allegedly kidnapped in mid-August by her mother Maria Servillon.

Gomez, 40, was on his way back from a pedestrian undercrossing repair project when he noticed the vehicle that Servillon was driving on John Daly Boulevard in Daly City. He had earlier seen a description of the vehicle on a Caltrans changeable message sign (CMS).

Without warning, there was the vehicle — sitting in front of him. Just as he was eyeing the sports utility vehicle, he heard a second description come over his car radio. "I noticed the car right in front of me. I was just staring at it when KGO confirmed it."

Gomez, who has worked for Caltrans for a dozen years, called 911 and then carefully followed the suspect car on to Interstate 280 and then eventually to Highway 1 in San Francisco.

As he kept a dialogue going with the 911 dispatcher, Gomez followed the vehicle on to Alemany Boulevard where the suspect made a short stop at a convenience mart.

All the time "two things were going through my head," said Gomez. "I didn't know the details of the abduction, so I was very cautious. There was a safety concern. At the same time, I was worried about what to do if she took off.

"I didn't want to chase the car (in a high-speed pursuit), but I didn't want her to get away either," said Gomez, framing his understandable quandary.

As it turned out, he didn't need to make the choice.

Soon after the suspect pulled away from the convenience store, officers from the San Francisco Police Department and California Highway Patrol pulled up behind Gomez. He flicked on the amber construction lights on the rear window of his state car — which, by the way, were visible to officers approaching from the rear, but not to the suspect — and signaled toward the suspect vehicle.

Law enforcement officers took it from there and eventually were able to retrieve the three-year-old Mikayla.

So, does Gomez consider himself a hero?

Well, a little no and a little yes.

"I've thought about that. The really heroic thing would have been if I had jumped out of the car, struggled with a really bad guy and took him to the ground.

"But, yes," he added after a bit of prompting, "I guess I am a hero." Would he do it again?

"Heck yes. I was alert enough to help that day. But now I know that the Amber system really works."

Thanks to Gomez, it certainly did this time.

D10's Chester Hawkins Dies in Highway 49 Accident



Chester Hawkins, a 12-year Caltrans veteran, died July 30 when the 10-wheel dump truck he was driving left the pavement on Highway 49 near the Merced River Bridge and plunged 650 feet into a rayine.

Hawkins, 53, was a Caltrans Equipment Operator II in District 10's Groveland Yard. The cause of the accident is still under investigation.

"This is a tragedy for District

10 and for the Department," said District Director Kome Ajise. "Chester had an excellent work record and will be greatly missed by all of us here."

He was born September 14, 1950, grew up in Hughson and was a graduate of Hughson High School's Class of 1968. Friends and relatives remember him as an avid fan of both the San Francisco Giants and the 49ers. He was a life member of the National Rifle Association, and he loved hunting, camping and fishing.

He is survived by his wife of 23 years, Susan Hawkins of Groveland. Other survivors include daughters Suzanne Sanders of Denair, Sarah Getreu of Modesto and Lindsey Hawkins of Groveland; and brother Terry Hawkins.

Services were held Aug. 7 in Hughson, with interment at Lakewood Memorial Park.

Donations in his memory can be made to the National Rifle Association-ILA, Attn: Diane Smith, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030.

Sacramento Region Launches 511 Travel Info Phone Number, Web site

Second Region in California to Establish 511 service

Just in time for the Labor Day travel rush, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has announced activation of a new 511 comprehensive traveler information telephone number and Web site for the Sacramento region and beyond.

The new number replaces and consolidates the proliferation of travel information numbers into one easy-to-use-and-remember telephone number for all of the region's transportation agencies.

Now, travelers have, at their fingertips, information about traffic conditions, public transportation, paratransit for elderly and disabled travelers, carpooling and vanpooling, Amtrak and bicycling throughout the Sacramento region.

They can dial the toll-free service from wireless and landline phones in the region, which includes El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties, as well as Butte, Glenn and Nevada counties.

The service provides links to already established 511 systems in the San Francisco Bay Area and Oregon. It is available in both English and in Spanish.

Caltrans District 3 has posted 22 of 110 scheduled road signs bearing the distinctive 511-swirl logo that will notify travelers of the availability of the new service.

Street banners are also planned for downtown Sacramento and other cities in the region.

"Caltrans is excited about being a part of this one-stop source for travel, traffic, transit and commuter information," said Caltrans District 3 Director Jody Jones.

"As the region's transportation planning agency, we are gratified to provide this quick and easy ser-



Photo by Jon Hirtz

vice for the region's travelers – whether by train, plane, bus, automobile or bicycle," said SACOG Board Chair Christopher Cabaldon.

"This service represents a giant leap forward in the traveler information for the Sacramento region," Cabaldon said.

Information for 511 comes from the California Highway Patrol, Caltrans,

SACOG, more than 20 transit operators, Amtrak, the Sacramento International Airport and the National Weather Service, among others. Funding for 511 is provided through local transportation resources.

The www.sacregion511.org. Web site will help users plan their daily commute, access transit providers, find a carpool partner, and learn about bicycling commute options. With the site's traffic information, users can check their commute options and know the road before they go, and call 511 for traffic updates once they've hit the road.

The Sacramento region service is part of a federally sponsored effort to provide travelers nationwide with one information number, like the 911 emergency number and 411-information number. The nation's first 511 service was launched in June 2001 in northern Kentucky and the Cincinnati, Ohio, metro area.

Thus far only a handful of states have implemented 511 service. In the west Utah, Oregon, Nevada and the Bay Area and now Sacramento have 511 service. Though Sacramento is the second area to implement 511 it could eventually grow to include the several counties north to the Oregon border and east to Nevada.

There is no TDD number for 511, but disabled persons can access infor-

mation through the 711 service.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments is the Sacramento region's transportation planning and funding agency. For further information, please contact Phyllis Miller, communication manager, the SACOG, at (916) 340-6224.



On a regular basis, Caltrans employees receive appreciation letters by external customers for outstanding performance. "Hats Off" features some of these well-deserved accolades earned by employees throughout the Department. Keep up the good work! (Editor's note: Letters can be submitted to Robin Witt for possible publishing. Letters may be edited for length and continuity.)

Editors Note:

To Caltrans Monrovia Landscape Department

I am writing this letter to express my gratitude for the noble and respectful acts of two of your fellow workers, namely, Mr. Steven Semenick and Mr. Kevin Pratt.

My name is Roger Ro. I have been living in the City of Arcadia for almost two years and working in the City of Pasadena for 15-plus years. I recently misplaced my laptop on top of the trunk of my car and drove away after a field test of a new product.

As I was later busy trying to recover as much data as I could at my office, my cellular phone rang with an unfamiliar number flashing on the screen. It was from Mr. Semenick. To my surprise, he told me that they found my laptop and he even proposed to bring it to me during his break. I was shocked but overjoyed and wanted to pick it up immediately.

I scheduled an appointment with Mr. Semenick and met him and Mr. Pratt around 11:30 a.m. Except scratches on the shell, my laptop survived.

They noticed the computer left on the side of the freeway ramp on Wednesday. Since they found it was still there the next morning, they decided to try their best to identify the owner.

Their challenge was that there was no contact information on the laptop's case. (However,) these two men did not give up. Eventually Mr. Pratt with his excellent computer knowledge was able to determine my initial. After matching hundreds of records in my address book, they found my cellular phone number and initiated the contact.

The dignified behaviors of Mr. Semenick and Mr. Pratt reflect the work ethics and moral principles held by the Landscape Department of the Caltrans Monrovia Office. Mr. Semenick and Mr. Pratt deserve, in my opinion, a public and formal recognition so such a representative act can be transformed into an ongoing encouragement for their coworkers as well as the communities they have been serving.

Kind regards, Roger Ro Vice President Director of Market Development MVH Soft, Inc. Pasadena



It was a terrifying experience and Dave stopped, helped me get my car out of the lane. He stayed with me and my vehicle until a tow-truck arrived and he then assisted the tow driver in re-entering traffic to tow my vehicle.

This type of service and willingness to help was above and beyond his scope of employment. It spoke well for him as a person and Caltrans as his employer.

fast lane.

I hope that this letter will serve as a recommendation in his employment file. You have a wonderful employee.

Djinn Ruffner Templeton

Hello Mr. (Barry) Martin

I just read an article in the Napa Register stating that complaints about the new interchange can be directed to you. I hope you're also willing to take compliments!

I love the new interchange! I commute from Napa to St. Helena every weekday and already enjoy the benefits of the new construction. I also want to compliment you and the crews working on the project for getting it done so quickly - it is not often that construction projects of this magnitude are completed AHEAD of schedule.

Finally, I want to say that the inconvenience to motorists during the construction period was limited, in my opinion. Well worth the reward of having the new interchange.

I can't wait for it to be complete, but in the meantime, please know your efforts are appreciated.

Patsy McGaughy Napa Valley Vintners

Good Training, Quick Action Saves D12 Maintenance Worker's Life

A District 12 Maintenance Crew Leader's quick and decisive action this summer may well have saved the life of a volunteer worker who suffered an allergic action to a bee sting while on duty.

One mid-morning in June, Costa Mesa Maintenance Crews and Special Crews Program People (SPP) were edging ice plants and weeding the Interstate 405 freeway.

One of the crew — called "Ann" here, since she prefers to remain anonymous — thought that the day's work would be like any other. She was assigned to do maintenance work as part of a court referral program. But Mother Nature had something else in mind. A sting from a common honeybee would make the day difficult to forget.

Severely allergic to such stings, Ann's breathing soon became extremely labored and

her throat began to swell and to close. That's when Crew Leader Robert Beyer, Jr., recognized her symptoms and took charge.

Realizing the danger, he sprang immediately into action. The victim managed to tell Beyer that she carried a bee sting kit inside her personal belongings.

While crews raced to retrieve the kit, Beyer was already on the phone calling 911 for assistance. He began describing the victim's reaction and vital signs to the telephone operator. The operator, in turn, gave instructions on how to inject the victim. With a timely injection of Epinephrine, Ann began to look and feel better almost instantly.

"I owe Bob my gratitude for reacting so quickly," she said. Paramedics arrived about five minutes after the injection was



Crew Leader Robert Beyer, Jr.

administered, and took Ann to the hospital (since she was still breathing irregularly and was swollen around the spot of the sting).

Beyer quick action is a result of some good training.

Caltrans Maintenance Crews receive Certified Standard First Aide Training every three years. The course covers CPR, seizures, heat stroke, exhaustion, cuts, burns, bruises and insect bites.

It comes in handy, too. In the past year, District 12 employees have reported six insect bites, three arm/leg fractures, 12 bruises and five heat stroke-related cases.

Although this is the first severely allergic bee sting reaction recorded in Caltrans District 12, it won't be forgotten soon. Ann has vowed never to work alongside the roadway again and the Crew Leaders will include

a questionnaire to all maintenance staff, regarding their sensitivity to bees.

When not rescuing co-workers, the Special Crews Program People (SPP) take on other important work. They tasks include assisting Caltrans with litter removal, weed abatement, pruning, clearing fence lines, drainage facilities, and other labor-intensive activities.

These crews come from various agencies, including: Court Referral Programs (Probationers), California Conservation Corps (CCC), Inmates from correctional facilities and California Youth Authority wards, Public assistance (welfare) recipients, or clients of State and Federal employment programs.

All SPP's are given a safety orientation that includes review of the applicable Codes of Safe Operating Practices.



The Special Programs Crew, from left: Richard Reed, SPP Crew Supervisor; and crew members Michael Nozawa; Roque Asistin; Ruben Carreon; Christina Eckensberger; and Frank Vicario. Second row, from left: Mark Tavares, Sal Lujan and Cornelius Turner.

TSP continued from page 2

"AC Transit is thankful to Caltrans for our successful partnership and the work that Kai Leung and District 4 Electrical Engineers put into the TSP for our Rapid Bus Project. They worked vigorously to design, test, and deploy this system ahead of its schedule," explained Paul Chiu, a Senior Electrical Engineer with District 4.

"This was a good project for the Department, and it was an opportunity to showcase a multi-modal transportation system,"

"Initially, we do not see any adverse effect on the traffic operation and there was no additional cost to Caltrans, other than the staff time. The headway-based system will improve the bus schedule and passengers will know when they can catch the next bus, and this will definitely increase ridership," Chiu said.

AC Transit plans to provide Rapid Bus arrival information on the Internet, at kiosks, and bus shelters. According to the AC Transit, depending on the funds, additional Rapid corridors are planned for implementation over the next several years, thus resulting in the traveling public saving more time.

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http://admin.dot.ca.gov/hr/recognition/index.shtml

Exams Schedule

The Caltrans Examination Office anticipates that the following examination bulletins will have a Final Filing date in September/October:

Accounting Officer (Specialist) (Promo)

Associate Construction Analyst (Open)

Caltrans Bridge Maintenance Supervisor (Promo)

Deckhand-Ferryboat (Open)

Dispatch-Clerk Supervisor, Caltrans (Open)

Equipment Material Operations Manager (Promo)

Ferryboat Master (Open)

Ferryboat Mate (Open)

Graphic Designer III (Promo)

Personnel Specialist (Open)

Plumber I (Open)

Research Program Specialist III (Transportation Economics) (Open)

Senior Librarian (Specialist) (Open)

Structural Design Technician II (Open)

Structural Design Technician III (Promo)

Supervising Cook I (Open)

Tree Maintenance Worker, Caltrans (Open)

The following examinations allow for continuous filing:

Caltrans Heavy Equipment Mechanic (Open)

Caltrans Heavy Equipment Mechanic (Promo)

Deputy Attorney, Caltrans (Open)

Deputy Attorney III (Promo)

Deputy Attorney IV (Promo)

Legal Secretary (Promo)

Transportation Engineering Technician (Open)

Transportation Engineering Technician (Promo)

Transportation Surveyor (Caltrans) (Open)

Transportation Surveyor Party Chief (Caltrans) (Open)

The following examinations allow for continuous filing on the Internet:

Senior Environmental Planner (Promo)

Senior Right of Way Agent (Promo)

Senior Transportation Engineer, Caltrans (Promo)

Visit our website at

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